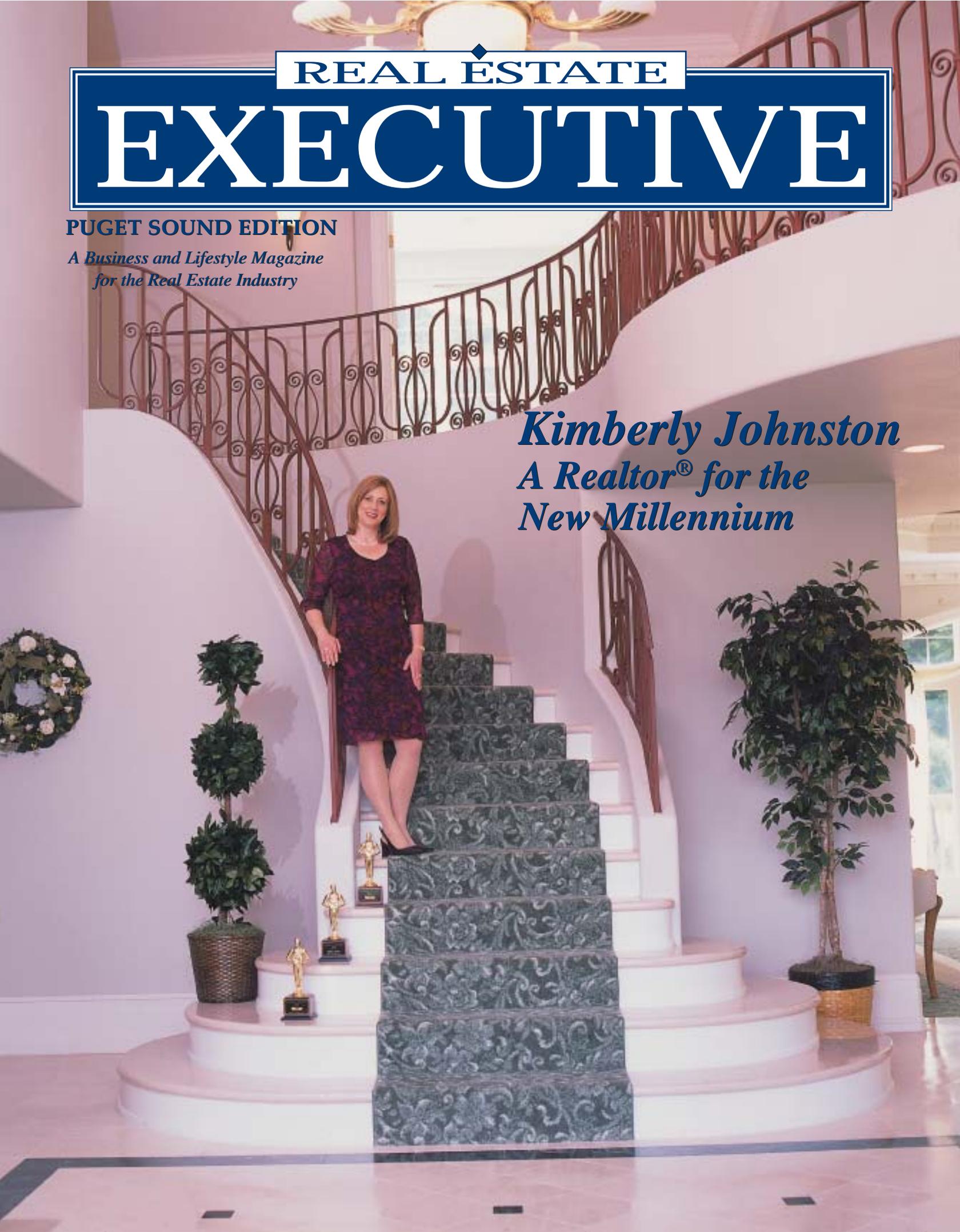


# REAL ESTATE EXECUTIVE

PUGET SOUND EDITION

*A Business and Lifestyle Magazine  
for the Real Estate Industry*

*Kimberly Johnston*  
*A Realtor® for the  
New Millennium*





# Kimberly Johnston

## A Realtor® for the New Millennium

By Lyle Myers

### *“The Kimberly Johnston Group Sells a home every 5 days!”*

**This is Kimberly Johnston’s motto:**  
*“Results in Real Estate.”*

**This is Kimberly Johnston’s philosophy statement:**  
*“Committed to You.”*

**This is Kimberly Johnston’s mission statement:**

*“My success is providing the highest level of service to you—my client. Your goals and aspirations are as important to me as my own, and I devote 100 percent of my time and energy to achieving them. I’m dedicated to representing referral clients. The effort I save by not pursuing public sales allows me to guarantee to you the undivided professional skill and personal attention you deserve.”*

If you have any doubts about any part of these statements, read on, for Kimberly Johnston is truly a one-of-a-kind real estate professional for which personal customer attention and happiness are what life has always been about.

“My success all comes down to every client has their own needs and I strive to accommodate those needs,” says Kimberly. “I like to get to know each client up front before we even start the whole real estate process.”

Kimberly has surrounded herself with a staff of seasoned professionals who also take their leaders’ business beliefs personally. “I think the most exciting part about my business and the people in my group is everybody is so genuine,” Kimberly says. “They really care about each client. Our clients always tell us, ‘I feel like I’m your only client.’ That’s how I want every client to feel.”

Kimberly is a Seattle native and

loves the Pacific Northwest lifestyle. At 20 years old, she held a job as a licensed optician, fitting contact lenses and glasses. At 20 years old she also bought her first house, an uncommon thing for a young single woman to do in those days, and in these days.

She just wanted to be an independent, career-motivated single woman who could take care of herself. “I didn’t have any plans for getting married until later in life, so I wanted to have things established. It was exciting. I thought of it as an investment, starting out towards the future.”

She also had the cash flow situation figured out. She bought the house and then got roommates to

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pay the mortgage. “When I got tired of having roommates,” she adds, “I took the equity, kept the house and them in the house, and bought a condo down by the water, because I’m a water person.”





*The John L. Scott name offered a big attraction, as well as the technology-mindedness of visionary J. Lennox Scott, President of John L. Scott Real Estate seen here on the right, with Martin Evans, Kimberly's Business Manager on left and Kimberly in center. (Photo by Allen Koenig Photography.)*

Although Kimberly found out it's not always fun being a homeowner, especially when you have to replace a roof, she realized that the home buying process had intrigued her enough to try selling real estate herself. "In the 1980s, buyers weren't encouraged by Realtors® to get an inspection, Realtors® weren't as savvy as they are now, and mostly they represented the sellers. I thought, 'If my Realtor® can do it I know I can do it, and maybe even a little bit better.'"

Kimberly went back to the office that had helped her find her home and got a job working evenings and weekends doing commission sales, while still keeping her opticians' day job, where she had great pay and benefits. "I would go into the real estate office in the evenings and work from six until midnight, and then every weekend. I

did that for four years, but I loved it so much I didn't feel like I was working. I was single and didn't have responsibilities, and my mortgage was covered by my roommates and my other job."

It was during this time in her life that she met her future business manager, Martin Evans. "I noticed right away that she had a real passion for the business. It was easy to see that she was going to be successful because she would put in the time, she would do the homework, and whether she realized it or not she went to every successful agent in that office and, because she's got great people skills, she would talk to them very casually but ask them, 'How did you grow your business?' and 'What kind of strategies did you use?' She was just like a sponge, taking it all in and formulating her own strategies."

Although she was pulling down a comfortable \$40,000 a year at her day job, a friend advised her that she was crazy to remain an optician and that she needed to go into the real estate business full time. Kimberly decided that if she could make \$40,000 a year in real estate she would be happy. "I had no idea of the potential for income in real estate," she says. "I just liked being independent, being my own boss, and knowing that I created my own success. You have to be proactive, not passive waiting for things to happen. It's also so diversified; you aren't in an office at a desk all the time—you actually go to different places and meet new people."

Kimberly worked in the south-end real estate office from 1990 until she made the move to the east side and John L. Scott in 1996. Although by this time she had married and was living in Issaquah, at the time she still made the commute to the south Seattle office. She did this partly because of her clientele being based there and partly because she knew that the east side is a very competitive market.

Finally, she decided that she needed to "take the plunge" and move her business east. She had worked with an agent in the John L. Scott, Bellevue South office before and so knew of its location. "I had talked to the broker, Karen Lindsay, at my office more than a year before I joined her. She spent time helping me even before I moved to her office. Karen is one of the strongest brokers in the industry and she is the reason I stay.

"Also, the John L. Scott name offered a big attraction, as well as the technology-mindedness of visionary J. Lennox Scott, President of John L. Scott Real Estate. After thinking it over, there was no reason to go anywhere else."

Once set up in her new office, Kimberly immediately began to set new goals for herself and pushing herself to achieve them. One of her goals was to be not only in the Presidents Club of top associates, but to rank in the top one percent nationally. She joined the club in 1996 and has been in the top one percent since 1999. She

ranked number nine out of 3,000 agents for John L. Scott in 2001.

In order for Kimberly to be in the top one percent, she knew she would have to make some changes in her business plan. She put more systems in place to smooth out operations. She hired Executive Administrative Assistant Kerissa Githens and Marketing Specialist Candi Pike. "Candi is amazing," says Kimberly. "She has helped me to get where I've gotten because she understands real estate marketing and how to get results. Kerissa, besides being very organized and focused, has got the most positive outlook of anyone I've ever met."

The closer she came to achieving her goals, the more people she added to her team. "You could see it as she progressed," says Martin. "She added one person, then two, and now her group is four. Every time she wanted to go to the next level she asked herself, 'What do I need to do now?'" She's also learned to delegate responsibilities in order to become a more effective leader.

It was during this phase of her business's development that Martin came onto the scene as Kimberly's business manager and challenged her to develop a business plan. John L. Scott has a business plan, but this one was more detailed.

Her first business plan became the template for her success. She started doing quarterly evaluations, and tracking herself towards her plans. "I was so proud of that plan," she remembers.

"It made the difference," says Martin, "because she went from just being an agent on 'How much business can I do?' to 'How am I going to move to the next level, this is a business, what do I need to do and what are all of the components of it and how do I get there?'"

Incorporating all of these components into her business opened up more time for Kimberly to focus her energy on her clients. Back then she dealt with both the buyers and the sellers, but it got to the point where she realized that she couldn't have balance in her life as one person trying to be all things to all people.

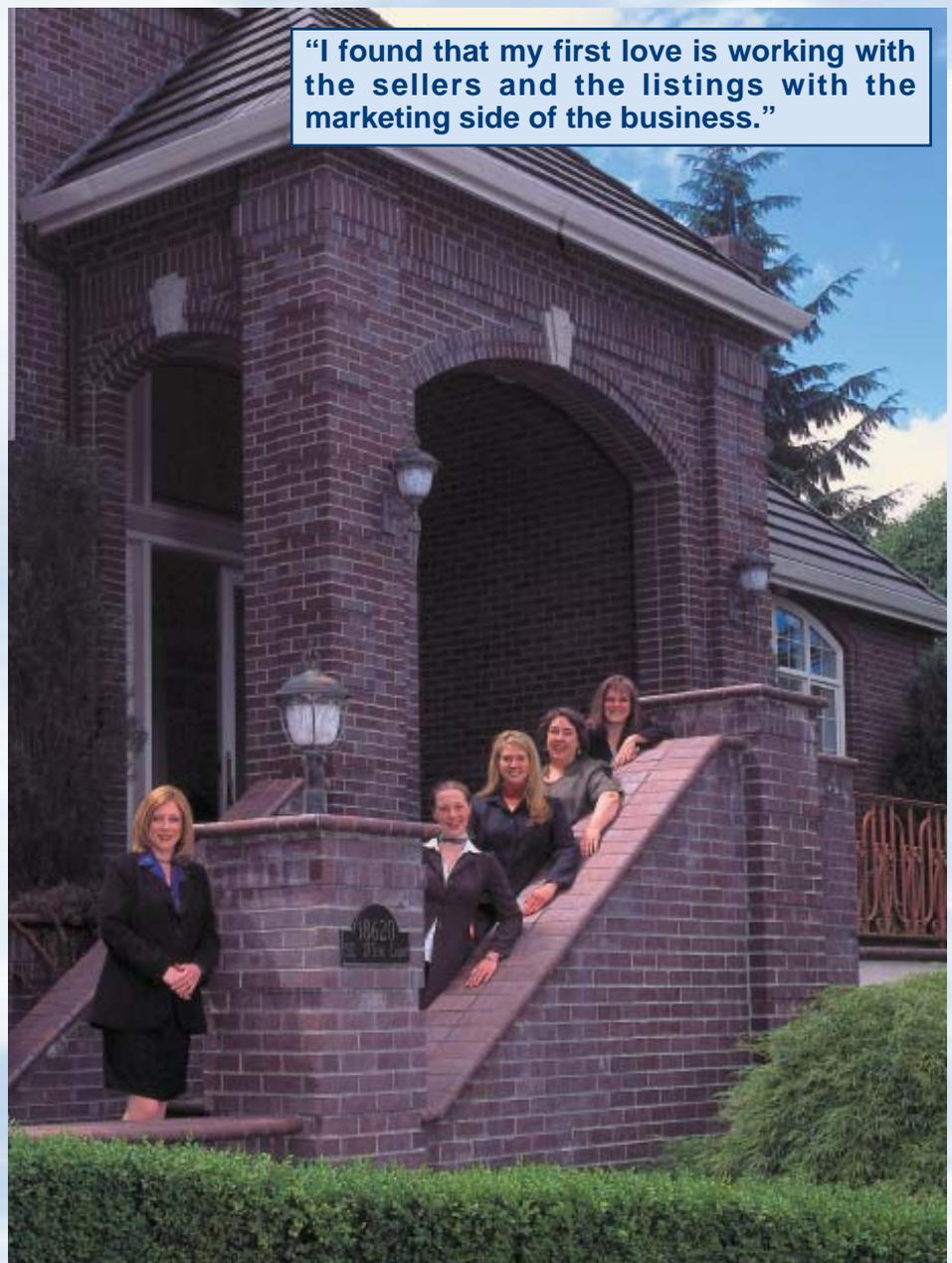
"That's when I hired a buyers' agent," she says. "I found that my first love is working with the sellers and the listings with the marketing side of the business."

These days Kimberly's group includes two Buyers' Agents, Sarah Nelson and Tina Cooper. Both Sarah and Tina work with new home buyers as well as those buyers looking for more upscale properties.

There are advantages to the group concept, and customers can appreciate those advantages. For example, Tina and Sarah never have more than three or four buyers at a time, so they can focus exclusively on each

client. This allows them adequate time to be following up every day, looking for new home listings for their clients, because a competitively priced house, even in a slower market, is not going to be available a week from now. "People want to be treated fairly, and their time is valuable, too," says Kimberly. "***We never ever put a client on hold.***"

The Kimberly Johnston Group tries to keep their listings at any one time around 20. They believe that if you have too many listing, you are giving less attention to each listing. "I've actually seen her make some tough decisions and turn down a listing,



Kimberly is seen here with her amazing team at one of their high-end listings. Together they are known as "The Kimberly Johnston Group." (Photo by Allen Koenig Photography.)

saying 'I can't provide 100 percent of the service so it's not the right thing to do,' says Martin. She'll then refer that party to a Realtor® whom she trusts to provide that service. ***The Kimberly Johnston Group is 100 percent focused on providing the best customer service.***

Last year, the group sold on average one house every five days, and they believe they are on track to repeat or top that success this year. "We set goals and evaluate results. We like to say every year we are continuing to give quality service and get even more referrals versus saying, 'This year we are going to do 150 transactions,'" says Kimberly. "I think if you get into the numbers game, you lose sight of what's really important." Considering that 80 percent of their business day in day out, month after month, is referral or repeat business, the group's motto, philosophy, and mission statements are obviously taken literally and to heart.

Speaking of heart, every agent contributes a portion of every commission to Children's Hospital and Re-

gional Medical Center.

When a client signs up with The Kimberly Johnston Group they can expect that every technology available will be employed to help make that sale. As soon as the initial listing process is complete, including determining a price, gathering information about the property, and taking high quality interior and exterior photographs, it is shown on at least *eight different Web sites*, which when combined, attract over 50 million hits per month. "Customers always love to hear that," says Kimberly.

Another technology the group uses is to have the title company research homes in their repertoire that have been tax-assessed less than the listing to determine possible buyers who are looking to make a move-up purchase.

Kimberly also sends out several hundred custom-designed "Just Listed" cards, depending on the size of the listing. "Each house is unique and has a specific marketing plan," says Kimberly. "Kimberly is extremely honest with the client," adds

Martin. "I think what comes across, and the reason why she gets the listing is that she's not pushy, but she's aggressive. She's also very consistent with her customized program, but if there is a need or a particular interest or client want, she is flexible and accommodating."

Another benefit of the Group concept is accessibility. "Because we have three agents versus a single Realtor,®" explains Kimberly, "we can have a prospective buyer call us to see a listing, and we can go show them that home in an hour or less."

Kimberly believes that many agents are afraid to bring agents on board because of the financial commitment involved and because of the fear of not having enough business to provide for everyone. "I think the hardest thing when I started the group was that not very many agents do it, so there's not a book that you can go buy at the bookstore," she says. "And some of the top agents that have done it, they're not going to sit down with you and say this is how you do it, this is how your pay structure is going to be, et cetera."

To stay on top of the business and ensure its longevity, Kimberly has incorporated a series of staff meetings, including weekly meetings, weekly one-on-one meetings, and quarterly meetings that are usually conducted off-site. These meetings are designed to keep the group focused on customer service, the latest technology and the latest real estate trends.

Martin administers the quarterly meetings. In preparation for these meetings, he sends out questionnaires to ask the group what the issues are, what the opportunities are, and what is and is not working in order to analyze the business.

He also asks Kerissa to make out pie charts that indicate where the company is headed and how it's tracking towards its goals. And then he usually hands out a few homework assignments to the group prior to the meeting.

Martin says that during the meeting every member is involved, that they are very interactive. Although they



*Kimberly has earned total loyalty and respect from everyone in The Kimberly Johnston Group. Simply stated, says Sarah Nelson, one of Kimberly's Exclusive Buyers' Agents, "Kimberly does an excellent job managing the group and as a result, all of us work together as a team to provide the most comprehensive, quality service available and have a great time in the process!" (Photo by Allen Koenig Photography.)*



**“Our meetings are designed to keep the group focused on customer service, the latest technology and the latest real estate trends.”**

*“Results in Real Estate” is their motto. “Committed to You” their philosophy...with each one of these team players living these words each and every day, the buyer and seller in the Puget Sound area couldn’t be in better hands when they choose to work with Kimberly Johnston and The Johnston Group. Back Row (Left to Right)—Kerissa Githens, Administrative Assistant, Kimberly Johnston, Realtor®; Sarah Nelson, Exclusive Buyer’s Agent; Front Row (Left- Right)—Martin Evans, Business Manager; Candi Pike, Marketing Specialist; Tina Cooper, Exclusive Buyer’s Agent. (Photo by Allen Koenig Photography).*

follow an agenda during the meeting, Martin feels he plays a very facilitative role in the discussions. “The answers to growing the business and the answers to most of the issues that are out there are within the group,” he explains. “I think the way Realtors® work, it’s easy for them to go into their own silo in terms of ‘here’s what I’m going to do.’ These group meetings allow people to really break down those barriers and see how everything is working together and to make sure

they are moving in the right direction.” Another thing they strive to do with the quarterly meetings is to always have fun. The meetings usually go from Saturday mornings to late Sunday evening, and include fun things like paid massages for the entire group and going out for a nice dinner on the company. And when they say the meetings are held off-site, they travel to places like La Conner and Las Vegas. Having fun is an everyday aspect of the group.

Another positive attribute of the staff meetings is the development of a group synergy that’s exciting and creates a truly genuine feeling of camaraderie and connection that transfers over to the clients’ feeling of well-being, of being well taken care of by good people. Kimberly sums it up best when she says, ***“We want to be our clients’ one source. We want them to call us for everything, and they do, which is great!”***

**SOLD**



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